



the
**Episcopal Diocese
of Connecticut**

The Rt. Rev. James E. Curry
Bishop Suffragan

**Testimony of The Right Reverend James E. Curry
Before
The Gun Violence Prevention Working Group**

January 28, 2013

Senator Looney, Representative Miner, members of the Gun Violence Prevention Working Group, thank you for this opportunity to speak before you.

My name is James Curry and I am one of the three bishops of The Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut. We have two parishes in Newtown: St. John's Episcopal Church in Sandy Hook and Trinity Episcopal Church in the center of town. I am very proud of the clergy and people of these parishes as they minister to a community harmed so deeply by senseless slaughter and forever changed by the massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School. I grieve for the living as well as the dead. No parent, no priest, no community should ever have to bury children who were victims of such violence. I never want to have to stand again at the grave of a six year old like Ben Wheeler, a child of energy and joy and a special love for lighthouses.

At the root of these killings is access to guns with rapid-fire ability and high capacity magazines. That is a reality that we as a society must face. The massacre in Newtown is only the latest example of wholesale murder made possible because of the availability of assault weapons – a technology that has no place in our communities and no need among our citizenry.

I am here today to urge you to support legislation to ban assault weapons, limit the capacity of gun magazines, and institute universal background checks for any purchase of firearms. In the face of the slaughter in Sandy Hook we need to find a commonsense response that puts the lives of our children ahead of an un-restricted right to gun ownership. Charles Ramsey, Police Commissioner of Philadelphia, is absolutely right when he says: If the slaughter of 20 babies doesn't wake you up, then I give up, because I don't know what will. We need reasonable gun control in this country, or guess what, it will happen again."

The Episcopal Church supports the constitutional right of law-abiding citizens to keep and bear arms, but we also stand, by resolutions of our General Convention and Executive Council, for public policies to ban assault weapons.

The massacre in Sandy Hook is a wake up call for us as a society to challenge the violence of our culture and discern comprehensive responses to cycles of violence. We, the Episcopal Church, commit to building educational, formational, and spiritual resources toward this end.

In the past we, as a society, have been very slow to recognize and change the cycles of violence that infect our communities. Groups like Mothers Against Violence here in Hartford have been raising their cries for action and justice for years and we have not listened well. Now is the time to listen and to act. You have the opportunity now in the wake of the shootings in Sandy Hook to make significant legislation that can protect all our children and make our communities safer.

+ James E. Curry